



Exploring Norwegian Emigration Records: Finding Place of Origin

Liv H. Anderson , CGsm, AG[®]
andersonlh@familysearch.org

This class is designed to teach family history researchers how to find emigrants from Norway.

Objectives:

Patrons will be able to find emigrants:

- In early emigrations records-pre-1867
- In organized emigration records-post 1867

Background:

Most of the Norwegian people for whom we can find records are those people who left Norway from 1825 to 1920. An estimated 900,000 people left Norway during this period and immigrated to other countries, most of them to the United States and Canada. The emigrants from Norway who left before 1825 generally travelled to other countries and ports in Europe and left from there to come to America or to go elsewhere. You need to be familiar with the research sources available in the areas where your ancestors lived in the U.S. as well as Norwegian sources you may use to trace your ancestors to Norway.

See website: The Promise of America: <http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/emigration/>

Getting started: Find a place-name where your ancestor lived.

In order to trace your Norwegian ancestors in Norway you need to have the name of the place where they lived, were born, or were married. To find this information, you need an understanding of what records are available both in the United States and Norway. As you search the sources discussed below, have these questions in mind:

- Was your ancestor in the U.S. by 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930?
- Where did your immigrant ancestor reside in the United States?
- When did your ancestor emigrate?
- Did your ancestor emigrate alone or with someone?
- Did your ancestor emigrate as a child or as an adult?

- Was your ancestor married when he or she emigrated?

Search American records:

Search American records to find out everything you can about your Norwegian ancestor.

- Talk to living relatives of your immigrant ancestor. Search for personal information in sources you may have at home or at the home of relatives, such as vital records, bibles, journals, letters, pictures, funeral home records, or obituaries.
- Search immigration records. These can be found by searching the passenger list for each port, as well as the Ellis Island and Castle Garden records online. See online passenger lists at [ancestry.com](http://search.ancestryinstitution.com/search/category.aspx?cat=112)
<http://search.ancestryinstitution.com/search/category.aspx?cat=112>
- Search the U.S. census for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. These will list the year of immigrations as well as country of origin. This will help narrow your search to one year.
- Search other records of places where your ancestor lived in the United States, such as church records, court records, county histories, and phone directories.

Search Norwegian-American records:

Some of the following sources may have information about your ancestor. Search:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, online at <http://www.elca.org>
- Family History Library Catalog for Norwegian-American churches.
- Lutheran Church directories at the Family History Library (FHL).
- Naturalization records.
- The Andrew Ansel Rowberg Collection at the (FHL) on microfiche. See also [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Norwegian_American_Historical_Association_\(NAHA\)](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Norwegian_American_Historical_Association_(NAHA))

Norwegian-American Societies such as:

- Norwegian American Genealogical Center (NAGC) at <http://nagcnl.org>
- Sons of Norway at <http://www.sofn.com>

Universities and colleges:

These colleges (libraries) may have information about your ancestors.

Augustana College (Sioux Falls, SD), Concordia College (Morehead, NM), Luther College, Preus Library (Decorah, IA), Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma, WA), and St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN), have a wealth of information about immigrants from Norway.

Bygdelag

Bygdelag are organizations comprised of descendants who emigrated from specific localities in Norway to North America. See Bygdelagenes Fellesraad at www.fellesraad.com

Nordmændene i Amerika, deres historie og Rekord (The Norwegians in America, their history and Record). This volume is available at the Family History Library (FHL) 973 F2u Pt. 1 and 2

SEARCH NORWEGIAN RECORDS

Gazetteers

If you know the name of the farm where your ancestor came from, you may want to search the Norwegian gazetteers. The 1972 Postal Guide for Norway is online at

<http://da2.uib.no/cgi-win/WebBok.exe?slag=lesbok&bokid=nsf>

- Norske Gaardnavne (Norwegian farm names) by O. Rygh (FHL) 948.1 E2rg vols. 1-18 or online http://www.dokpro.uio.no/rygh_ng/rygh_form.html
- Postal Guides (1901 and 1972) (FHL) 948.1 E8ns 1901 pt. 1 and 2; 948.1 E8ns 1972

When you have searched the American sources and the Norwegian-American sources, you should now have a place-name in Norway. You can then continue your search using the resources identified below.

Emigration Records from Norway

If you still do not have a place-name and you only have a year of immigration from a U.S. census, you will want to search the emigration records for each port in Norway for that year.

Look for your ancestor's name in the emigration records by searching on the Internet first. Go to these helpful Websites:

- Digitalarkivet (Digital Archives) <http://arkivverket.no/eng/digitalarkivet> Search the year that he or she left Norway.
- Norway-Heritage [Http://www.norwayheritage.com/ships/index.asp](http://www.norwayheritage.com/ships/index.asp) This is a searchable emigration Website that may be helpful.

The online emigration records for Norway are indexed and are in print that is easy to read, but since several individuals have entered the information it does happen (not very often) that a person is left off. If this is the case search the emigration records on microfilm.

Things You Need To Know About Emigration Records

- The emigration records from Norway will list the last place of residence and usually the age of each person emigrating. If a whole family emigrated together, it will list the relationship to each person.
- If your ancestor left Norway prior to the organized emigration records from Norway (starts around 1867), you may want to search the Family History Library Catalog for early emigration records.
- One great set of books to search for early Norwegian immigrants is *Norwegian Immigrant to the United States: A Biographical Directory, 1825-1850* by Gerhard B. Naeseth. Available at the (FHL) 973 D3nn vols. 1-5.
- The emigration records on microfilm are available at the (FHL) and can be ordered from and sent to family history centers and some libraries.

LDS SOURCES

- Emigration from the Scandinavian Mission, 1853-1886. FHL 948 W2 2vols.
- Scandinavian LDS Mission Index (names extracted from LDS mission records). Available on microfiche by last name, then first name. Fiche no. 6060482 then part no. 1-344.
- Passport to paradise: the Copenhagen "Mormon" passenger lists by Shauna C. Anderson, Ruth Ellen Maness, and Susan Easton Black. Available at the FHL 973 W3, 2 vols.
- Clash of Cultures: the Norwegian experience with Mormonism, 1842-1920 by Gerald Myron Haslam. FHL 948.1 F2h 1984. List of early members Appendix I pgs. 123-141.

Want to learn more see: FamilySearch wiki for Norway

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Norway_Emigration_and_Immigration